

Contemporary Film/Video Theory
TuTh 1-3, 325 Annie May Swift

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office hours Spring 94: Tu 3-5 and by appointment
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Prerequisite RTF D20-1 or permission of instructor. This course presumes knowledge of D20-1, or an equivalent introductory survey of film theory

The course will examine some specific problem areas of recent film theory and connections between them through lectures giving background, discussion of readings which exemplify key arguments, and screenings of works which illustrate or challenge the theory.

The course begins with consideration of some basic texts in contemporary film theory highlighting concepts such as counter-cinema, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and gender and race difference. The course will continue with a consideration of recent work in analyzing cinematic narration. Then the course will conclude by examining a problematic genre--the contemporary male action hero film--and try to develop an understanding of how narrative, race, gender, and class analysis can be used to examine such works.

A typical class will consist of a lecture giving background and discussing major concepts followed by a class discussion of the assigned reading for the day. A. [15 % of final grade] Some readings will be presented by members of the class by means of a one page essay. (A written copy is due to the instructor) Students are expected to actively participate in discussion and have read and prepared the readings and have them present during discussion. B. [20%] A set of organized presentations will be done by students working in pairs or groups for the section on narrative. C. [25%] Each student will find an excerpt from an action film of their choice to develop a detailed analysis of a sequence, in support of a larger theoretical idea. These will be presented in rough draft form to Kleinhans and the other students the last week of class, and will get feedback (no grade). Group studies with individual papers are possible. A revised version is due at the final exam and will be graded. D. [25%] An in-class final exam will cover the entire course and include a discussion of a tape screened during the last class. Students may bring one page of notes to the final.

books (at Norris Center Store) plus additional readings (on reserve or handout)

Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, London: Routledge, 1992

Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester UP; NY: St. Martin's, 199?)

Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Beyond* (NY: Rouledge, 1992)

Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (NY: Routledge, 1993?) [possible late addition, will arrive later in quarter]

It is assumed that the student has retained from the first part of the course:

Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier*
Aumont, Jacques et al. *Aesthetics of Film*
Rosen, Phillip. *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*

All the above titles and the following have been placed on two hour reserve at the library.

Steven, Peter. Jump Cut: Hollywood and Counter-Cinema
Nichols, Bill. Movies and Methods, vols. I and II
Enzensberger, H. M. The Consciousness Industry
Jameson, Fredric. Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.

Students are required to see the following films and tapes listed in the syllabus. Some will be shown in class. Others must be seen outside of class at the Library Media Center (and excerpts will be shown in class for discussion purposes). In addition, students must see on their own, outside of class, the following action films: Above the Law, Out for Justice, Blue Steel, and one other of your choice which represents a different culture than than the U.S. (such as Hong Kong martial arts--Bruce Lee films would be a good choice--or Bombay films with action sequences) or which uses a person of color in the hero role (e.g., Shaft, Coffy, Passenger 57, etc.). Group viewing is encouraged, or mini-ethnographic screenings you arrange.

The following reading assignments indicate by underlining those texts which are most important and which need very close careful reading.

Th 31 Mar
background review
screening, A Movie (Bruce Connor)

Tu 5 Apr
the postmodern text
begin readings (below) and view Young Mr. Lincoln (U Library Media Center)
screen: Jean-Luc Godard, Masculin-Feminine (RTF) critical screening with
commentary by Kleinhans.
Bordwell on Classic Hollywood Film
Lapsley & Westlake on Realism (156-181)

Th 7 Apr
Ideological analysis, 1 (authorship)
read: L&W 105-129
eds. of Cahiers du cinéma, on Young Mr. Lincoln
screen: YML, excerpt

Tu 12 Apr
Ideological analysis, 2 (structuralism)
outside screening: Morocco (media center)
screen: excerpts from von Sternberg, Morocco
read:
Cahiers du cinema, Morocco
[ghost text: Mulvey, VP&NC]

Th 14 Apr
counter-cinema
read: L&W 1-32
MacCabe ↗ Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure ↗
Wollen on ↗ Godard and Counter-cinema: Vent d↗ Est ↗ [Wind From the East]
screen: excerpt, 6 x 2 (Godard and Miller)

Tu 19 Apr
Psychoanalysis, 1
Read:
Bertrand Augst, "The Turn to Psychoanalysis"
Christian Metz, "The Fiction Film and Its Spectator" (in Metz)
[thoroughout this section on psychoanalysis, the discussion of spectatorship in Aumont may be useful, also the discussion in Flitterman]

Th 21 Apr

Psychoanalysis, 2

read: L&W on Psychoanalysis 67-105, Kleinhans handout

screening: Nightmare Alley

Tu 26 Apr

Narrative, 1 Lapsley & Westlake, 129-156, Burgoyne pp 69-96 [throughout this part of the course on narration, the discussion in Aumont may be useful]

excerpt, Stage Fright

***student presentation

Th 28 Apr

Narrative 2, Burgoyne pp 96-127

excerpt, The Crying Game

***student presentation

Tu 3 May

Narrative 3, Brannigan pp1-85

***student presentation

Th 5 May

Narrative 4, Brannigan pp 86-160

excerpt, Hangover Square

***student presentation

Tu 10 May

Narrative 5, Brannigan pp 161-217; L&W 181-220

screening: Sans Soleil (Sunless) (Chris Marker, France, 19--)

Th 12 May

***discussion, Sans Soleil

intro to Action film

read: Kleinhans, ↗ Working Class Film Heroes: Evel Knievel, Junior Johnson, and the Film Audience ↘ (in kSteven) and "Class in Action," (handout), begin Tasker

Tu 17 May

Action, excerpts

Th 19 May

Action, gender and race

read, Dyer, "White"

*****Sat 21 May

Frame Grabbing Party at Chuck's

students will select individual frames from an action film to produce a close analysis of a segment for the final paper

Tu 24 May

Identity and Utopia

read: Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media"

Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"

Th 26 May

no class, work on close analysis

Tu 31 May

draft versions of close analysis due at 9am in Chuck's mailbox

course evaluation

student presentations

Th 2 June

student presentations

final exam questions handed out

screening for final

Janet Tenaka, Memories from the Department of Amnesia

Exam week:

Fri 10 June 12-2

In class final exam (students may bring 1 page of notes)

due: revised version of action paper